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Acquisitions and Metadata Branch



Field Borders

Conservation Practice Job Sheet

386

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

April 1997

Landowner _____



Definition

A field border is a band or strip of perennial vegetation established on the edge of a cropland field.

Purpose

A field border reduces sheet, rill, and gully erosion at the edge of fields; protects water quality by trapping sediment, chemical and other pollutants; provides a turning area for farm equipment; and provides wildlife habitat.

Where used

- On the outside edges of fields.
- Complementary to a conservation management system.

Requirements for establishing field borders

Field borders should be a minimum of 20 feet wide and should be wide enough to allow turning of farm equipment.



Conservation management system

Field borders are normally established as part of a conservation management system to address the soil, water, air, plant, and animal needs and the owner's objectives. A field border used with contouring, contour stripcropping, cross-slope farming patterns, or terraces eliminates the normal planting of end rows or headlands in uphill and downhill directions. It also provides a turning area for farm equipment, which reduces sheet, rill, and gully erosion. Field borders can also provide forage production and improve farm aesthetics. They are most effective when used in combination with other agronomic or structural practices to provide conservation benefits.

Operation and maintenance

Inspect and repair field borders after storms to fill in gullies, remove sediment, reseed disturbed areas, and take other measures to ensure the effectiveness of the border. Mow (and harvest if possible) field border vegetation during noncritical times for wildlife to encourage dense vegetation growth.

Wildlife

Field borders can enhance wildlife objectives. Benefits depend on the vegetative species used and management practiced. Consider using adapted native vegetative species that can provide food and cover for important wildlife. Increase width, if needed, to provide necessary protection for nesting animals from predators. Delay mowing of grassed area until after the nesting season for ground-nesting birds and animals.

Specifications

Site-specific requirements are listed on the specifications sheet. Additional provisions are entered on the job sketch sheet. Specifications are prepared in accordance with the NRCS Field Office Technical Guide and the Field Border practice standard (386).

Field Borders – Specifications Sheet

Landowner_____ Field number_____

Purpose (check all that apply)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Wildlife habitat	<input type="checkbox"/> Trap sediment, nutrients, pesticides, other contaminants
<input type="checkbox"/> Stabilize field boundaries, turnrows, and headlands	<input type="checkbox"/> Erosion control
<input type="checkbox"/> Provide protective turnrow or equipment travel lane	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify):

Field border layout (For exact location see job sketch)	Field border 1	Field border 2	Field border 3
Border width (ft)			
Border length along edge of field (ft)			
Area (ac)			
Slope (%)			
Species #1			
Species #2			
Species #3			
Seeding rate (PLS) (lb/acre)			
Lime (tons/acre)			
N (lb/acre)			
P ₂ O ₅ (lb/acre)			
K ₂ O (lb/acre)			

Site Preparation
Prepare firm seedbed. Apply lime and fertilizer according to recommendations.
Planting Method(s)
Drill grass and legume seed _____ inches deep uniformly over area. Establish stand of vegetation according to recommended seeding rate. If necessary, mulch newly seeded area with _____ tons per acre of mulch material. May seed small grain as a companion crop at the rate of _____ pounds per acre, but clip or harvest before it heads out.
Maintenance
Maintain original width and depth of the grass area. Harvest, mow, reseed, and fertilize to maintain plant density, vigorous plant growth, and to remove plant nutrients. Inspect after major storms, remove trapped sediment, and repair any eroding areas. Shut off pesticide sprayers when turning on a field border.

Field Borders – Job Sketch

If needed, an aerial view or a side view of the field border layout can be shown below. Other relevant information, such as complementary practices, and adjacent field or tract conditions, the positioning of multiple or single row sets across a field or tract, and additional specifications may be included.

Scale 1"=_____ ft. (NA indicates sketch not to scale: grid size=1/2" by 1/2")

Additional Specifications and Notes:

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